

NEWS FROM ED MARKEY

United States Congress

Massachusetts Seventh District

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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MASSACHUSETTS SCORES LOWEST IN BIOTERROR PREPAREDNESS STUDY -- *REP. MARKEY DEPLORES LACK OF READINESS*

Washington, DC: Rep. Edward Markey, senior member of the House Select Committee on Homeland Security, today called on the Administration and the Commonwealth of Massachusetts to act immediately to fix the deficiencies identified in a new national report on bioterror preparedness.

“There have been so many red flags - from the anthrax attacks to SARS to the flu vaccine shortage – that it is difficult to comprehend why the Bush and Romney Administrations haven’t done what they need to do to get us ready for a bioterrorism attack,” said Rep. Markey, noting that Massachusetts received a score of 3 out of 10 in the report released by the Trust for America’s Health.

“It is particularly distressing that Massachusetts received the worst rating,” Markey continued. “At the same time that Massachusetts cut its public health budget, its federal funding levels were also cut by more than \$1 million. The result is we don’t have the resources to respond to either a chemical or biological weapons attack, we don’t have enough scientists to test for diseases like anthrax if there was a suspected outbreak, and we don’t even track disease outbreak information using national standards.”

The full report, “Ready or Not? Protecting the Public’s Health in the Age of Bioterrorism,” found that many basic bioterrorism detection, diagnosis, and response capabilities are still not in place.”

“With our world class hospitals, biotechnology centers and research institutions, this is simply unacceptable. I call on the Governor to restore Massachusetts’ public health budget, identify funds to compensate for the federal funding shortfall and make bioterrorism preparedness a top priority,” Markey concluded.

Rep. Markey is the author of a law requiring that potassium iodide pills be stockpiled in strategic locations to help prevent thyroid cancer in the event of nuclear releases from powerplants.

For additional information, please visit <http://www.house.gov/markey>.

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